

In the face of declining coverage and soaring costs, more and more senior citizens are being left out and left behind. The vast majority of the elderly are of moderate means. They cannot possibly afford to purchase the prescription drugs they need if serious illness strikes.

The older they are, the more likely they are to be in poor health, and the more likely they are to have very limited income to meet their health needs.

Few if any issues facing this Congress are more important than giving the nation's senior citizens the health security they have been promised. The promise of Medicare will not be fulfilled until Medicare protects senior citizens against the high cost of prescription drugs, in the same way that it protects them against the high cost of hospital care and doctor care.

Vice President GORE has been fighting for prescription drug coverage under Medicare since 1993. President Bill Clinton has called for immediate action in his last two State of the Union Addresses.

The Administration has put a solid program on the table for the consideration of Congress—and their program is affordable for senior citizens and also for the federal budget—because they do not use the surplus for hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks for the wealthy.

The Bush plan is not adequate and it is not Medicare. In fact, he has also endorsed a regressive plan to change Medicare in a way that will raise premiums and force senior citizens to join HMOs.

That is not the kind of Medicare the American people want, and it's not the kind of prescription drug benefit they want either.

Under Bush's version of Medicare reform, the premiums paid by senior citizens for conventional Medicare could increase by as much as 47% in the first year and continue to grow over time, according to the nonpartisan Medicare actuaries. The elderly would face an unacceptable choice between premiums they can afford and giving up their family doctor by joining an HMO.

Senior citizens already have the right to choose between conventional Medicare and private insurance options that may offer additional benefits. The difference between what senior citizens have today and what George Bush is proposing is not the difference between choice and bureaucracy—it's the difference between choice and coercion—driven by a right-wing agenda of privatization. On this ground alone, it deserves rejection, regardless of its provisions for covering prescription drugs.

But the program to cover prescription drugs is equally flawed—so flawed that it is an empty promise for millions of senior citizens. To begin with, the value of the Bush program to senior citizens is only one-half of what Vice President GORE has proposed. The reason is obvious—after massive tax breaks for the wealthy, there is not

room in the Bush budget for adequate prescription drug coverage for senior citizens.

The Bush plan provides little help to the vast majority of senior citizens who are not poor, but are of modest means and cannot afford large drug expenses or large increases in Medicare premiums. Under the Bush plan, these seniors have to pay three-quarters of the cost of their prescription drug coverage—and the coverage is not even adequate.

In the entire history of Medicare, senior citizens have never been asked to pay such a high share of the cost of the premiums for any benefit.

The defects in the Bush plan go far beyond the inadequacy of the benefits. It is a program that only a drug company executive could love. For the first four years, there is no Medicare benefit at all, just a program of block grants to the states for providing coverage for low income senior citizens. Senior citizens want Medicare, not welfare, and they deserve Medicare, not welfare.

When the Bush plan finally becomes available to all seniors, it does not provide a real Medicare benefit—or any other adequate benefit. Instead, it gives senior citizens what is, in effect, a voucher—and it tells them to go out and buy their own coverage from a private insurance company. If the price is too high in the area in which they live, they are out of luck. If the drug company's list of approved drugs does not include the medicine they need, their only recourse is a time-consuming appeal. There is no defined benefit—senior citizens are not even guaranteed the same coverage in Missouri that they would get in Mississippi. It is all up to the insurance company.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that under the similar Republican plan passed by the House of Representatives, benefits would be so inadequate and costs so high that less than half of the senior citizens who need help the most—those who have no prescription drug coverage today—will even participate.

A prescription drug benefit that leaves out half of the senior citizens who need protection the most is not a serious plan to help senior citizens.

It is ironic that in offering this inadequate plan, Mr. Bush has criticized Vice President GORE for a "big-government, one-size-fits-all" solution. The Gore plan covers prescription drugs under Medicare in exactly the same way that Medicare covers doctor and hospital costs. Mr. Bush obviously feels this is a one-size-fits all solution. That is why he has endorsed an extreme restructuring of the Medicare program. He may favor forcing the elderly into HMOs, but that is not what Democrats in Congress support. That's not what Vice President GORE supports. Most important, that's not what the American people support.

There is still time for Congress to enact a genuine prescription drug benefit under Medicare. The Administra-

tion has presented a strong proposal. Let's work together to enact it this year. It is not too late. The American people are waiting for an answer.

I am hopeful we will pass that legislation. Again, I am strongly committed, as I believe my colleagues, Senator DASCHLE and others are, to ensure we will have an opportunity to vote on that measure before we adjourn.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

TO AUTHORIZE EXTENSION OF NONDISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Iowa is recognized.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, we started earlier today the initial discussion of what I call the China trade bill, the Senate by law ratifying the agreement that has been worked out by this administration and the Government of China to level the playing field for trade between the United States and China.

In a simple form, the bill before us will give access for U.S. exporters—meaning manufacturing, services and agriculture—to China on the same basis that China has had access to our markets for the last 15 to 20 years.

When you have an opportunity for our people to export to China, to sell to China, on the same basis that China has been able to do with the United States, it is a win-win situation. My Midwestern common sense tells me this is a good situation for America. So that debate has started today.

We are on the question of the motion to proceed. I support this motion. I hope we get to a final vote on the bill, because I think it will pass by an overwhelming margin, not the very narrow margin that it passed in the House of Representatives. This will give us an enhanced opportunity to do business with 20 percent of the world's population.

There are many reasons I support this bill, which is probably one of the most important matters to come before the Senate this session. But today, I would like to address just two reasons. The first is the issue of jobs, a very positive aspect to this legislation. The second is human rights, which some people view as a reason for being against this legislation. I suggest to you that even though the human rights situation in China is not good, trade gives us an opportunity to improve that human rights situation.

In each case, I want to address concerns of real people in a commonsense way. Too often, when we talk about major policy changes, we do so in lofty terms, not connected to the people's concerns and their interests, and what is important to everyday working Americans.

Today, I would like to talk about how real people will be affected by making it possible for the United States to take advantage of China's pending accession to the World Trade Organization.

Lowering protectionist tariffs and tearing down trade barriers that discriminate against American products will create many thousands of new American jobs. A new era of free trade with China, under the WTO World Trade Organization disciplines, will help us continue to build the tremendous prosperity that we enjoy as a direct result—a very direct result—of the success of our postwar trading system; going back to 1947, as we have used the gradual freeing up of trade around the world to expand the world economic pie. Because of free trade, with a population that is now about double what it was back then, we now have more prosperity for more people. If we had not expanded the world economic pie, we would, in fact, have less for our increased world population. So think in terms of the economic enhancement of individuals and the political stability that comes from it.

In my State of Iowa, we know our economic interdependence with the rest of the world is not a policy choice; it is a fact. Trade means jobs anywhere, but particularly in my State. In just 5 years, Iowa's merchandise export to China has soared 35 percent.

In the Waterloo-Cedar Falls area—that is close to where I was born, and where I have lived my entire life—recent merchandise sales to China have surged 806 percent. Iowa's trade-related jobs mean that a young couple can afford their first home. They can afford tuition for school. They can afford to buy a car. They can afford to care for their families, the way working people want to care for their families.

But unless we seize this moment, this opportunity will pass us by. When China enters the World Trade Organization, which it will do regardless of the outcome of this vote on the Senate floor—and if we do not remove all of our current conditions on trade with China, which this bill does—other countries will reap the rewards of a trade deal that we helped negotiate. American companies then would be forced to sit on the sidelines as companies from the European Union or Asia or Africa or elsewhere take our business and ultimately take our jobs because we have not assumed this opportunity of freer trade with China.

If we pass up this opportunity, America will be at the end of the line of the 137 other WTO countries, that will be standing in front of us, trading with China.

I want to give my colleagues two real-life examples from my State of Iowa.

Tucker Manufacturing Company is a family-owned business in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, that has developed a unique window-washing system which it makes and sells around the world. Tucker has

made a few small sample sales to China and has found a distributor that would like to make a large order. Tucker knows that in the past state-owned distribution companies in China have dictated commercial terms that have often harmed exporting companies like Tucker. They would like to see China become a World Trade Organization member so that distribution rights are no longer strictly controlled by the state, meaning the country and Government of China, and so that any new transactions in China then are protected by the rule of law, which is what the World Trade Organization regime is all about—the rule of law, predictability in international trade, the resolving of disputes in international trade.

A second example from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is the Diamond V Mills Company, which I visited just last week. I had the opportunity to present it with the Commerce Department's E-Star Award for excellence in exports. They had already received the E award, now they have the E-Star award that indicates they have been highly successful in international trade on an ongoing basis.

Diamond V Mills has exported its yeast culture feed ingredients to China since 1996, but they did it by operating through a local distributor. The company wants to sell directly to its end user but has not been able to do so—until this agreement goes through—due to China's current restrictions on a foreign company's rights to distribute its products in China.

Under the WTO accession agreement, China has committed to opening its markets to the private distribution networks that Diamond V Mills of Cedar Rapids needs. If Diamond V Mills can get access to new distribution networks in China, it will generate more sales, earn more revenue, provide more jobs in Iowa, create more opportunity and more prosperity for everybody.

These are only two examples of how Iowa's manufacturing sector will benefit through expanded trade with China. There are many more. We have Iowa's farmers and agricultural producers seeing tremendous benefits from this proposal as well because China's World Trade Organization accession agreement will dramatically lower agricultural tariffs and eliminate many nontariff trade barriers. As a result, our farmers will sell more soybeans and more soy oil to China than ever before.

After the United States, China is the second largest consumer of corn and corn products in the world. As the distinguished Presiding Officer knows, my State is No. 1 in the production of corn in the United States, as his State is No. 1 in the production of wheat.

China's WTO commitments will create a great export opportunity for Iowa's corn growers and for corn growers across the United States.

Iowa State University professor Dermot Hayes recently told my inter-

national trade subcommittee that if China fully implements its WTO accession commitments we could see hog prices rise by as much as \$5 per head. That is a larger benefit than any of the Government support programs we have heard about lately.

Unlike some of the proposals I have heard, we would not have to impair our obligations under the WTO's subsidies agreement, or the WTO agriculture agreement, to do it.

Second, I want to discuss the issue of human rights and political freedoms in China because this is a legitimate issue, even though I disagree with the argument that killing this bill is going to help human rights in China. I wish to make it clear I don't find fault with those who bring it up as part of this debate because I think wherever we can try to say to China that they are going down the wrong road on human rights, they are hurting their country, not us.

Like all Americans, Iowans care deeply about the struggle for liberty. Many have family members who have given their lives in freedom's cause, or they know someone who has. It hurts us to hear horrible accounts of repression. We are rightly repelled. We don't understand why it happens, and we want it to change because we think freedom is an innate right for the Chinese as well as for Americans. But the fact is, we can never turn China into a model of constitutional democracy if we isolate them economically. However, we can help bring about fundamental reform in China's economy and political structure through enforceable WTO rules that do not discriminate and are consistent and are not arbitrary.

In addition, I have a firm conviction that regardless of how necessary a political and rule of law environment is for trade to take place and political leaders such as the President of the United States and other people negotiating with the Chinese, none of those efforts, as important as they are, can compare to the opportunities for advancing political freedom and human rights that will come when millions of American businesspeople interact with millions of Chinese businesspeople on a day-to-day basis. That is going to do more to improve human rights than anything else.

When it comes to making decisions, the WTO applies the democratic principle of consensus rule. All of these principles—democratic decision-making, nondiscrimination, non-arbitrary regulation—are also the obvious, essential ingredients of political freedom. The process of economic reform, guided by China's WTO commitments, will mean that China will become more open. They will eventually become more free. We know, perhaps better than any nation on Earth, that economic and political freedoms share deep roots.

That economic and political rights go hand in hand is at the heart of America's constitutional heritage. Many in

China know that economic and political reform are closely linked as well. That is why many of China's military hardliners oppose China's entry into the World Trade Organization.

Perhaps it is this inevitable linking between economic reform and political freedom that has inspired the Dalai Lama, no stranger to China's religious repression, to say:

I have always stressed that China should not be isolated. China must be brought into the mainstream of the world community. . . .

To those who doubt that economic reform has occurred in China, or that it is significant, I ask them to consider how much has changed in the last half century. You will remember that in 1952, China's Communist government mounted a wide-ranging crusade to undermine private entrepreneurs, businesspeople were commonly condemned as "counterrevolutionaries," and many were assessed large fines and forced out of business.

In fact, by 1956, China required all private firms to be jointly owned and, in fact, run by the government. In practice, this meant that we had state control of all private enterprise in China. It wasn't until the early 1980s that private enterprise began to reemerge in China. More significantly, it wasn't until 1988 that the private economy even had a defined legal status in China.

Today, 12 years later, China is a different country. Today, young Chinese engineers who studied and worked in California's Silicon Valley are going back to China, lured by entrepreneurial opportunities that didn't even exist a few years ago.

The number of individuals employed by the private sector in China has soared by over 31 percent in the last 3 years. That is bad news for China's state-owned enterprises. That happens to also be bad news for China's People's Liberation Army, which depends on many state-run businesses for revenue and have opposed these reforms that are going on within China, including this agreement before the Senate.

But this development is good news for the cause of freedom. As the number of individuals employed in the private sector rises, the state will have less and less direct control over how people think and how people react to political change.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Edward Steinfeld is one of our country's keenest scholars on what goes on in China. This is what he had to say about the meaning of China's World Trade Organization concessions on China's direction as a country:

The concessions of 1999 represented a thorough reversal of course. Instead of reform serving to sustain the core, the core itself would be destroyed to save reform, along with the growth, prosperity, and stability reform has brought to China.

In the new view, instead of using market forces to save state socialism, state socialism itself would have to be sacrificed to preserve the market economy.

I agree with Professor Steinfeld. China's membership in the World Trade Organization will require it to reform a very large portion of its economy, and not only to comply with WTO rules, but to be able to compete internationally.

With a "yes" vote on the motion to proceed and a "yes" vote on approving permanent normal trading status for China, we can help change the world. China constitutes one-fifth of the world's population. We can be on the right side of history. We ought to be on the right side of history. I urge a vote for this motion to proceed and a vote of yes on final passage.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWNBACK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I would like to use an amount of my leader time prior to the time we go to the energy and water bill to speak on an unrelated matter.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

FIREFIGHTING HELP IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I haven't had the opportunity yet today to welcome all of our colleagues back and to express my hope that we use this next period as productively and as successfully as we can.

As have most of my colleagues, I had the opportunity to spend a good deal of time at home in South Dakota for the last 3 weeks.

I especially want to commend the Forest Service for the extraordinary job they have done in fighting historically the most consequential fire we have had in the State now, with 85,000 acres of timberland burned. I am grateful for the response we have had from people all over the country. I especially thank the Forest Service, the Governor of the State of South Dakota, William Janklow, for the remarkable job he has done, the National Guard for their response, and the volunteer fire departments from all over the State of South Dakota and surrounding region.

We are grateful for their extraordinary response, and we are grateful as well for the effort that has been made to contain the fire which is now 85-percent contained.

I thank the volunteer ambulance personnel whom I met from all over the State. We are experiencing what many of our colleagues are experiencing with volunteer ambulance service. Many of

them are on the verge of going out of business because of reimbursement schedules for Medicare and Medicaid. Without those, especially in rural areas, we are in a very serious set of circumstances involving the health and in many cases the lives of people who live in rural areas today.

I thank those in schools all over South Dakota who opened their doors and their offices to me in Kadoka, White River, Lemmon, and most of our Indian reservations in Belle Fourche. I thank them.

I thank those who especially were willing to meet with me on hospital reimbursement and appreciate very much their willingness to talk about how serious the circumstances were with regard to Medicare reimbursement for hospitals and clinics throughout our State.

I must say, at virtually every one of our stops we had occasion to talk about the unfinished agenda here in the Senate. I want to talk just briefly about that prior to the time we turn to another important piece of legislation, the energy and water bill.

UNATTENDED LEGISLATION

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, there is great concern about unattended legislation, legislation having to do with health care, education, meaningful gun safety, and minimum wage. There is no legitimate reason we could not have accomplished something on each of the issues I have mentioned and many more.

There is no legitimate reason this Congress couldn't have passed a real Patients' Bill of Rights long before this.

There is no good reason we couldn't have added a voluntary Medicare prescription drug benefit.

There is no reason we couldn't have agreed by now to strengthen our children's schools. We have had many opportunities. There are those who say that passing bills is hard work.

If you want to see real hard work, go to Murdo, South Dakota some day. Talk to Cathy Cheney and the five other members of her volunteer ambulance squad.

They are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When a call comes in—even if it's in the middle of the night—they drop whatever they're doing, leave their jobs and families, and go. Most times, they are not back for at least 3 hours.

When they're not answering calls, they're studying for certification tests. And they don't get paid a dime for any of it. That is hard work, Mr. President. And it is not just South Dakotans who face challenges like this.

Go to any community in any state in America, and you'll find people who are working hard—some of them are working two and three jobs—to make a decent life for themselves and their families, and to give something back to their communities.